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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS FR 002144

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL 11/21/2018  
TAGS: [UNESCO PREL FR JA EG IS NO](#)  
SUBJECT: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNESCO DIRECTOR-GENERAL RACE

Classified by Ambassador Louise V. Oliver for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

REF: (A) Paris FR 02103  
(B) Paris FR 02119

¶1. (C) Summary: The Egyptian Ambassador to UNESCO has asked for meetings with the Japanese and French Ambassadors to UNESCO to find out if the Government of Japan (GOJ) and the Government of France (GOF) are supporting the Egyptian candidate for the next Director General of UNESCO. The results of those meetings will help the Egyptians decide whether to move forward with a formal nomination of their candidate, Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni. In the meantime, Ambassador Oliver has confirmed that the Ambassadors of Israel and Germany, as well as the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway, agree with the U.S. position on Mr. Hosni. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Egyptian Ambassador to UNESCO, Dr. Shadia Kenawy, has requested a meeting with the Japanese Ambassador to UNESCO, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, on November 21 to find out the position of the Government of Japan (GOJ) regarding the Egyptian candidate for UNESCO Director General, Minister of Culture, Farouk Hosni. The Japanese Ambassador told Ambassador Oliver that the GOJ will be unable to openly state its opposition to the Hosni candidacy at that meeting because of its desire to keep the current Japanese Director General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, out of the election process. However, Ambassador Yamamoto said that the GOJ had given him permission to tell the Egyptian Ambassador that it had "grave concerns" about Mr. Hosni's candidacy. The Japanese Ambassador also said that the GOJ had been lobbied on November 10 on behalf of Mr. Hosni by the Foreign Minister of Qatar. (N.B. That was three days before Ambassador Oliver informed the Egyptian Ambassador about the U.S. opposition to Mr. Hosni's candidacy.) He also said that he had been instructed by the GOJ to meet with the Ambassador of Brazil on November 24 in order to share the concerns of the GOJ with him.

¶3. (C) The Egyptian Ambassador has also requested a meeting with the French Ambassador to UNESCO, Catherine Colonna, on Monday, November 24, presumably to ascertain the French position on Mr. Hosni. Although Ambassador Colonna has told Ambassador Oliver on several occasions that the GOF opposes the Hosni candidacy, she did not say how direct she could be with the Egyptian Ambassador. The French Ambassador also told Ambassador Oliver that she would try to find out what other countries the Egyptian Ambassador is talking to. In addition, the French Ambassador suggested that a small number of other countries, such as Germany, should be discreetly informed about the U.S. position, in case they are approached by the Egyptians for support. On November 21, Ambassador Colonna also told Ambassador Oliver that Egypt's Ambassador to the UN had just met the individual responsible for international organizations at the Quai d'Orsay and had not mentioned Mr. Hosni's candidacy for the UNESCO Director General position during that meeting.

¶4. (C) On November 20, Ambassador Oliver met with the Israeli Ambassador to UNESCO, David Kornbluth, to get an update from him on the DG race. Ambassador Kornbluth stated that after Mr. Hosni's remarks on burning Israeli books in Egyptian libraries, a number of countries had approached him to state their deep concerns about Mr. Hosni and to say that they did not think he was an appropriate candidate for UNESCO's next Director General. These countries

included Mexico, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, and Mauritius. He also mentioned that he thought that Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Monaco would probably not support Mr. Hosni. Ambassador Kornbluth added that the Government of Israel (GOI) thinks that Mr. Hosni is the worst of all possible Arab candidates, as he has consistently blocked any possibility of expanding Egyptian-Israeli cultural ties during his twenty years as Culture Minister. He also said that Mr. Hosni has a vast machine at work in Cairo supporting his candidacy. Ambassador Kornbluth said that he doubted that Egypt would withdraw Mr. Hosni's candidacy given how much time and effort they have spent promoting it. He thinks that it would be a huge loss of face for Egypt, and does not see Egypt "buckling down to soft pressure". He added that in the unlikely event that they did so, the GOI would continue to have difficulty supporting an Egyptian for the Director General position. He did not elaborate.

15. (C) Ambassador Kornbluth also said that six months ago the Russians had indicated that they were supportive of the possible candidacy of UNESCO's Brazilian Deputy Director General, Marcio Barbosa. The Israeli Ambassador will speak to the Russian Ambassador to UNESCO, Mr. Vladimir Kalamonov, to determine their current position. (N.B. The Russian Ambassador told Ambassador Oliver that he would be leaving UNESCO in January.) Ambassador Kornbluth also mentioned that he was told that initial French support for Mr. Hosni was in exchange for Egyptian support for Dominique Strauss-Kahn at the IMF. During his meeting with Ambassador Oliver, the Israeli Ambassador said several times that he had been instructed by the GOI to take a low profile position at UNESCO on the Director General race, and that he did not expect those instructions to change in the immediate future.

16. (C) Ambassador Oliver met with the Ambassador from Germany, Gunter Overfeld, on November 20 to discuss the Director General race.

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Ambassador Overfeld was pleased to learn that the U.S. had told the UNESCO Egyptian Ambassador of the U.S. opposition to Mr. Hosni's candidacy. He added that although he was comfortable with an Arab candidate, including a candidate from Egypt, he agreed that Mr. Hosni was not the right person for the UNESCO position. Ambassador Overfeld also agreed that the U.S. position should be kept quiet for the moment, but thought it might be helpful if the German government expressed its concerns on Mr. Hosni's candidacy to the Egyptians, without mentioning the U.S., given the fact that the Egyptians have not yet formalized Mr. Hosni's candidacy.

17. (C) Ambassador Oliver also met with the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to UNESCO, Ole Briseid, on November 20 to inform him of U.S. opposition to Mr. Hosni's candidacy. Mr. Briseid said that the Government of Norway was strongly opposed to Mr. Hosni. He added that he understood that the other Nordic countries, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, agreed with this position. He also said that the Nordic countries would like to have a Director General who is strongly committed to freedom of expression and of the press, and that Mr. Hosni had not demonstrated that commitment. Mr. Briseid said that the Egyptians have not yet approached Norway, and that as far as he knew, the same was true for the other Nordic countries. He understood that the U.S. wanted to keep its position quiet in order to allow the Egyptians to consider withdrawing Mr. Hosni's candidacy, but asked to be kept informed if the U.S. decided to change its position and take a more public approach. (N.B. The Nordic countries are among the largest contributors of extra-budgetary funds to UNESCO.)

18. (C) Comment: Mission believes that the Egyptians are now talking to several major countries about Mr. Hosni in order to decide whether to move forward with his candidacy. If they think that Japan and France would be willing to support Mr. Hosni, or at least not oppose him, the Egyptians will probably decide to nominate Mr. Hosni formally. The Egyptians have been conducting a very aggressive and smart campaign thus far. After getting support from the foreign ministers of all Arab countries, they are in the process of getting

support from as many Ministers of Culture as possible. At the moment they seem to have the support of most of the African Ministers of Culture, and according to a recent article in the Egyptian press, the support of Spain's Culture Minister. Because Mr. Hosni has been the Egyptian Minister of Culture for twenty years, he has personal relationships with many of these individuals. The Egyptians expect that the Ministers of Culture will be able to persuade their respective heads of state to support Mr. Hosni. The Egyptians will probably offer "deals" to those who are reluctant to support their candidate, as they did to the Ambassador of Lithuania in order to try to persuade her to withdraw from the race. (N.B. The Lithuanian Ambassador to UNESCO, Ina Marciulionyte, has just been officially nominated as a candidate for the Director General post by the Baltic States.)

19. (C) Comment continued: Although it is clear that there are many countries who are not enthusiastic about, or are even opposed to Mr. Hosni's candidacy, nothing has been said publicly by anyone thus far, either because they think it is premature to do so, or because they are too nervous to risk offending Egypt. However, the Egyptians are probably aware of the lack of enthusiasm for their candidate in a number of countries, and will not want to risk losing a secret ballot vote at UNESCO's September 2009 Executive Board session. This is a critical moment for the Egyptians, and a coherent U.S. strategy in coordination with other key countries might be able to stop the Hosni candidacy and enable new candidates to enter the race.

OLIVER